1: Junod M-5 (1895-1909)1927 Thonga

places the food (phamela) on plates of the size of small basins or dishes (mbenga). We have seen how she distributes it amongst the inhabitants of the village. When all have finished eating, the women wash the plates, put aside the pots which contain the food left for the next morning, and tidy up the yards.

Whatever we may say, the day has been a well-filled one for the women. They are very rarely seen playing in the day time. We shall see how they recuperate themselves in the evening.

II. *Men's occupations.*

As for the men, their life is far from being as active as that of the women. They have not, like their diligent wives, the regular continuous work of preparing the food, not to mention the care of the children. The duties which fall on them, and which they are willing to perform, only require of them isolated efforts from time to time.

As regards *agricultural work*, it is generally believed that men leave this entirely to the women. This is exaggerated. Amongst the Rongas each man possesses his own field which he himself tills, and this is an old custom, a special term even being applied to the field thus tilled: it is called *mpashu*. He may sow seeds in it, but he does not weed it, leaving his wife to do this troublesome work for him and also to reap it. He makes only one exception in the case of the sorghum, of which he consents to go and cut the ears. But he helps his wife in other ways, for instance in the storing of the food; he builds the little huts used as storehouses, prepares the *tjala*, viz., the mat stretched on four poles on which ground nuts are dried in the field, digs holes for the *buhiri*, the shelf at the back of the hut where the basket containing the seeds is placed. His wife does not think him a lazy fellow at all. When the harvest is finished, she takes the smaller cobs of mealies (makunhula), those which will not be kept, or the grains of millet and sorghum which are found on the threshing floor after the threshing, and with them she prepares a special beer to

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643 619 seems to have been particularly feared. He had even bought poison from white people and is said to have killed his rival, Musongi, chief of the Maputju clan, with whom he fought the battle of Malangotiba in 1870. He sent a woman of bad life to Maputju. The woman succeeded in winning the confidence of the king and poured this poison into his glass. Nowadays the Ronga chiefs have been taught by the Authorities to sit in council when discussing matters.

643 The two principal prerogatives of the chief are the right of *luma* and taxation.

III. *The right of luma, and the first fruits rites.*

181 241 We come to a set of rites which might be dealt with when considering the Agricultural life, but I prefer to describe them here, as they provide us with a typical illustration of the constitution of the clan ; they are highly characteristic of the Bantu community, a community which is essentially agricultural in its pursuits, animistic in its beliefs, and hierarchic as regards its social and national life.

643 262 784 527 241 We have already met with the word *luma* and noticed that its ordinary meaning is *to bite* ; its ritual sense is to *remove the injurious character of a given food by a certain ceremony*. The luma is a necessity before eating the flesh of certain wild beasts, as we shall see when studying the laws of hunting (See Part IV). But it is of still more importance, and one of the great laws of the clan, that the official luma shall take place before the subjects eat the products of the new year. There seem to be two ideas at the root of this strange taboo :

1) To eat certain kinds of food is dangerous for one's health, and the first mouthful taken must be seasoned with the royal drug.

2) The gods, the chief, and elder brothers, have a prior right to enjoy the products of the soil. To precede them in doing this is a sin which would bring them misfortune. The hierarchy must be absolutely respected.

643 The law of luma seems to have applied to all kinds of food
262 in former times. Nowadays it is not observed for the following
171 products : maize, Kafir beans and peas, rice, sorghum, water
527 melons (makalabatla) and monkey nuts. It is partly observed
241 for mafureira almonds (tihuhlu), strychnos paste (fuma) and
— pumpkin leaves (magawane). It is strongly enforced for black
1 Kafir corn and bukanye. Such is at any rate the case in the four clans of Nondwane, Mabota, Ñwamba and Tembe. Amongst the Zulus and Swazis on the contrary, I have been told people luma maize and do not luma kafir corn. Kafir corn is probably the most ancient cereal amongst the Ba-Thonga, and bukanye has always existed in the country. This is perhaps the reason why these luma rites, which bear a very old character, are still applied to these products to the exclusion of other more modern cereals.

I. *The luma without a religious ceremony.*

631 Let us first study the less ritualistic kind of luma, the luma
262 of the *mafureira almond*, for instance. It is practised in each
643 sub-chief's village, and, though it is tending to become obsolete,
527 it is still enforced by some "tihosana." Thus my neighbour in Rikatla, Habele, the hosana placed by Mobvesha over this part of the territory, met some time ago a boy who was eating these almonds, the description of which I shall give later on.— "Who gave them to you ?", asked Habele... The child kept silent.—"Come with me to your parents!" Having found their home, the sub-chief scolded them severely : "You have started sucking (munya) the almonds before us. You wanted to kill my head ? Pay a fine!" They answered : "The birds made them fall from the tree... The children were not guilty!" However they had to pay 500 reis.

262 The luma of almonds, which takes place in December, when
643 they are ripe, is performed in the following way. The almonds
527 are dipped into a small calabash full of water to soften them. Some of the powder of the nyokwekulu is added to them. The headman first takes some for himself and then distributes them to his people. They suck the almonds, take in their hands the part

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643 wife in the path follows her husband who walks at his ease, with
651 his stick in his hand, whilst she carries his belongings in her basket
641 on her head... If the prerogative of the chief is to live in abundance, the duty of the subject is to pay taxes! This duty is expressed by the word *luba* (Dj.), *hlenga* (Ro.). It is so true that this is the principal function of the subject that, when a man leaves his clan and goes to live in another clan, he comes to the chief and says : "I want to *luba* or *nkonza* (a word borrowed by the Rongas from the Zulus), to pay the tax..." This is the proper way of making his submission.

643 The explanation of the rites of the first fruits throws much light on the Bantu conception of the chief's position in respect to his subjects. For them he is certainly endowed with the divine right more fully than the King or the Kaiser in any European country ; he is the *son* of the gods, not only their protégé... The gods are the lords of everything... He shares this lordship with them. Hence his right of taxing his subjects. On the other hand we saw that he is the *soil*! He is more than Lewis XIV, who could say: "L'État c'est moi!" The Bantu chief can say : "I am the earth! — Le sol c'est moi!" Hence, on the part of the subjects, the duty of sharing with him the products of the soil and also of their hunting.

643 The Thonga chief taxes his subjects in four different ways :
651 he takes a regular portion of the harvest ; he claims a part of
241 most of the wild beasts killed ; he makes his people work for him ;
273 he also taxes the revenue of those who go away to work for the Whites. A fifth source of his revenue is found in the fines imposed in judicial cases.

1. As regards *taxation of the products of the soil*, it consists in a basket (shihundju) of mealies contributed by each village at harvest time. This is the regular taxation. Moreover those who brew a great quantity of beer for a feast always send some jars to the chief, especially when the season of tilling the fields or threshing the grain has come. This is not a regular tax, at least amongst the Ba-Ronga, and is considered as *mashobo*, an act of civility, and not as *hlenga* proper. Bukanye must be brought to the capital in great quantities during the great national feast.

177 461 637 lobola money. But they learn to spend money on other things, and those who are converts to Christianity become regular purchasers of clothing, of better food, of books. The high taxation to which they are subjected also forces them to work. As long as this does not exceed a reasonable limit, and as long as the State causes the Native community to benefit by the high taxes levied on it, it is justifiable although this way of enforcing labour is not so normally healthy as the creation of 241 177 412 462 new wants (1). Another powerful influence which tends to make men work more and to relieve women from the toil of tilling the fields, is this. Wishing to make money by selling grain, the Natives are beginning to clear larger fields than before, and we note with pleasure that they have adopted the use of the plough instead of the hoe in a great many quarters. The consequence of this change is that the men now do

466 P. 177. 46 (1) Another means has been used to obtain the same result, i. e. compulsory labour (in Thonga *shibalu*). It is not at all my intention to treat this important but delicate subject here. The League of Nations created in 1924 a special Slavery Commission which has very ably and fully discussed the whole subject. These discussions have resulted in a Convention which was adopted by the Assembly of 1926; art. 5, which deals with forced labour, runs as follows:

The High Contracting Parties recognise that recourse to compulsory or forced labour may have grave consequences and undertake, each in respect of the territories placed under its sovereignty, jurisdiction, protection, suzerainty or tutelage, to take all necessary measures to prevent compulsory or forced labour from developing into conditions analogous to slavery.

It is agreed that:

(1) Subject to the transitional provisions laid down in paragraph (2) below, compulsory or forced labour may only be exacted for public purposes.

(2) In territories in which compulsory or forced labour for other than public purposes still survives, the High Contracting Parties shall endeavour progressively and as soon as possible to put an end to the practice. So long as such forced or compulsory labour exists, this labour shall invariably be of an exceptional character, shall always receive adequate remuneration, and shall not involve the removal of the labourers from their usual place of residence.

(3) In all cases, the responsibility for any recourse to compulsory or forced labour shall rest with the competent central authorities of the territory concerned.

The League of Nations has thus established the general principles, and nearly thirty States have already signed the Convention; amongst these we note with pleasure Great Britain and Portugal. Now the question has been transferred to the International Labour Office, which must deal with the application of the Convention. A special Committee of experts has been elected and it is hoped that it will fix general principles for Coloured Labour, which shall be submitted to the General Labour Conference in a not distant future.

I am glad to add that the Portuguese Government has recently issued a decree (Nº 12.533) which has been published in the *Bolletim official de Moçambique*, November 1926, and which contains the following article (Art. 5. § unico): *Compulsory labour is only permitted when absolutely indispensable, for works of public interest and of undeniable urgency. This labour will be remunerated according to circumstances.*

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241 462 177 the work of preparing the fields. As women have nothing to do with the cattle and as ploughing is done with oxen, men now perform this difficult labour, and so have to work hard. Is not this one splendid result of the spread of civilisation ? The fact cannot be denied that, as regards the mode of living and the distribution of work amongst men and women, a considerable change has already taken place and is being accentuated every day in the Thonga village. What will be the ultimate result of this ?

When discussing the Native problem, the most difficult of all South African problems, politicians, missionaries, civilised Natives and newspapers generally ask this question : "Is Native tribal life to be preserved or, on the contrary, destroyed ?" No clear, satisfactory, convincing reply has as yet been given. Tribal life is composed of two elements : communal life and national life, which ought to be considered separately. I deal here with the first of these elements only. The first remark I would venture to make is that it is somewhat presumptuous on our part to believe that we can exert any very great influence on the solution of this question. Whatever one may hope or fear, the evolution of the Bantu village, which began as soon as civilisation entered the land, will go on. It is not in the power of the Pope, of the Minister of Native Affairs, or of Superintendents of any large Missionary Societies, to prevent the transformation of the primitive patriarchal tribes, which is proceeding as a matter of necessity. Human society evolves continually, and the economic and social changes which have taken place in South Africa are so momentous that they will deeply affect and eventually completely transform the Bantu community. But (this is my second remark) what we can strive for is to control and guide this necessary evolution, and I should like to propose, to all those who can collaborate in the shaping of the future Bantu society, the two following suggestions :

000 1. Though the square house may supplant the round hut, though the hubo, the bandla and the absolute authority of the numzane may disappear, let us do our best to prevent the future Native village from being a servile imitation of our own European settlements. The more original the Natives remain, the more interesting and worthy to live they will be. The "place of jealousy" will disappear together with polygamy. But let us retain all that is pleasing and moral in the picturesque circle of huts : the respect for elders, the sense of family unity, the habit of mutual help, the readiness to share food with others. Cannot these virtues be retained in the Christian village, under the

C. AGRICULTURAL CUSTOMS.

I. *The Agricultural Year.*

137 221 At the season which is called *shimumu*, the little heat, that is to say in July, when the warm weather begins, the nkuhlu puts forth new shoots. Though rain is still far off, the mahogany and sala trees become covered with leaves of a wonderfully delicate green. A kind of Composita (the Helychrisum parviflorum, shirimbyati), which is wide-spread on the sandy dunes, blossoms all over the country ; a beautiful lily (Crinum Forbesii) will expand its splendid white and pink flowers : the *winter* (bushika) has passed away : soon the *hlobo* (summer) will come.

412 221 462 When the Ronga woman notices these signs, she picks up her hoe (shikomo) and starts for the hills, or for the marshes. Her husband has already repaired the implement for her, at home. If the handle was worn out, he has cut a branch of nkonono, (Terminalia sericea), which is the wood invariably used for the purpose, and has shaped it so that one end is thicker than the other ; in this thick end a hole is bored, while the iron hoe head is heated in the fire : the head has, at its base, a long iron point which is inserted nearly red-hot into the hole, burning its way in, and thus solidly fixing the two parts together. This method of fixing on the handle is called ku lumela shikomo. The Ronga hoe has a very short handle, sometimes not more than two feet in length. The Transvaal Thongas use handles three to four feet long. The woman has now nothing to do but to work hard, her lord and master having duly accomplished his share of the labour.

241 221 It is the end of August. Two or three months must still elapse before the rainy season sets in. This period of the year is devoted to a two-fold work : the clearing of fresh land and the cultivation of marshes.

The *clearing of fresh land*, ku tlhaba lisindje (Ro.), ku khatsha

241 221 313 (Dj.), in the bush which has never yet been cultivated, or has been lying fallow for a long time, is very hard work indeed! Beginning in the early morning the woman cuts down the small trees with her axe (khaula, dji-ma); if the stems are too large she lights a fire at their base and leaves them to burn until they fall. Natives have not the slightest idea of the value of trees, if

Tilling the fields near Makulane (Maputju country). *Phot. D. Lanoir.*

these trees do not bear edible fruit, and destroy whole forests without any compunction. As previously mentioned, the labourer spares only the nkanye, mphimbi, nkuhlu, etc., and sometimes the mimosa parasol (gowane, Albizzia fastigiata) which provides a beneficial shade for the maize. Then she breaks the soil with her hoe and piles up in heaps the weeds (bibi, dji-ma) and bushes which she has uprooted, leaving them to dry before burning them. [538] This is a long job and requires great patience. The old adage says very truly:

U nga bone bibi u ku ndji rimele. (Don't waste your time in looking at your heaps of rubbish, and fancying that your work is done!)

241 This work continues all through the months of August, September
221 and October.

Cultivation of Marshes (tjhobo, dji-ma). If the woman has already tilled plenty of ground on the hill, during the previous years, she will devote these three spring months to the cultivation of the wet hollows near the lakes, between the dunes. The gardens in the marsh are called *shiramba* or *mashamba* and are very different from those on the hills called *masimo* (1).

I will now describe those which I saw in the Rikatla depression. The middle of the hollow is a marsh filled with long Papyrus (bungu), slender Typha (papala, dji-ma) or reeds (lihlanga). They are cut, uprooted ; small canals are dug, in which the water collects. The roots and stems are piled in heaps, some three feet high, called *psibibi*, but they are not burnt. They are left to decay, and shilutane pumpkin seeds are sown in them, high enough to avoid putrefaction in the water. The soil is a wet black mud very favourable to the cultivation of rice. So a small plot a few square feet is sown, a *shingubya*, and, when the seeds have sprouted, they will be planted out all round. It seems that planting out has been known and practised for a long time by the Makaneta people who have large plantations of rice. Mealies are also sown in this region, in the spots where it is somewhat less wet : they will ripen one month earlier than those on the hill. The great pity is that the papyrus marsh is full of small birds called *nkapa* (mu-mi), which pluck out the tiny sprouts of mealies as soon as they appear and eat the half rotted grain at the roots. So children and women must scare away these marsh birds during these months, as they will the sparrows of the hills later on.

On the raised edge of the canals sweet potatoes are planted, not the tuber, but growing stems, which will bear fruit much earlier than those on the hill. Where water has entirely disappeared, manioc is also planted in the hollows and seems to prosper well. In early November the pumpkins of the *psibibi* will be fully developed and their leaves will provide the mistress

(1) Nsimu, cl. yi-tin, becomes in the plural masimu, cl.dji-ma ; it is one of the few exceptions met with in Thonga grammar.

of the garden with a good vegetable until the first-fruits themselves ripen and furnish a more substantial food. 241 ● 221

When the rains commence, sometimes as early as September, but generally later, it is *time to begin the regular sowing*. Everybody then starts for himself, because, although the fields tilled by the mother are the largest, every member of the family has tilled his own : the husband has his *mpasha* (I. p. 337) and each girl has her plot.

The Native idea is that every owner of a field must sow all principal cereals and vegetables in his garden, except peas, on account of their taboo. So, in a line on the border, are planted sweet potatoes and manioc. Mealie seeds are sown at a given distance from each other, alternating with Kafir corn and sorghum, and in between are planted ground nuts and beans. Watch how the mistress of the field proceeds to sow her maize : she walks along with short steps, at each one digging up a shovelful of well tilled earth, and planting in the holes three or four grains of maize, which she carefully covers over. The work is done in haste so as to take advantage of the last rains. The *lisindje* is first sown ; then begins the hasty tilling of the old fallow fields (pula, dji-ma). The crop is not likely to be so plentiful as that obtained from virgin soil, but the same fields can be used for three or four consecutive years before they become exhausted.

Natives have no idea of *fertilising the ground* in any way whatever ; at the most they may take advantage of the manure which has accumulated in some disused oxen kraal, to plant thereon a few gourds or some tobacco.

The operation of hastily tilling the fallow fields is often carried on by a *djimo* (dji-ma). Knowing that her fallows are very large and that she can hardly cope with them by herself, the owner calls all her neighbours to a djimo, viz., a working party, having wisely prepared a number of large jugs of beer. Neighbours will certainly accept the invitation as they may have to ask for similar help later on. So they come in the morning, and attack the fields with energy, singing and shouting all the time. There are special djimo songs, in particular amongst the Ba-Sutho. One may see them, some fifty black bodies toiling vigorously, 241 476 574 [533]

241 476 574

making the sand fly, their hoes working with marvellous rapidity! What excitement, what strenuous work, each one urging the other to still greater exertion and all hurrying to finish the job! They know that, there in the hut, ten big jars of beer brewed to a nicety wait for them, and that they will have a good time at midday, when the heat will be unbearable and the work done.

241 221

The maize grows and the weeds grow with it ; after the tilling comes the *weeding* ; this is the work for November, December and January.

It is done twice or thrice for the mealies. The first weeding is called *tjutja*, and is done when the mealie stems have reached a height of about one foot. The second is called *hlakula*. By this time the ground nuts and beans have grown, and this weeding is intended to be for their benefit also.

In January it is the *nwebo*, the time for the first ears of maize to ripen : it is also at that time that the fields of maize are apt to be ravaged by a species of coleoptera, called the *nunu*, of which I shall have more to say when treating of the superstitions of the tribe.

In January also the sorghum and millet attain their full growth, and the grain begins to form. *Sparrows*, *finches*, and other chattering birds take up their residence in the fields and begin to plunder them. Then women and children camp out from morning to night, in their plantations, and spend three whole months shouting, yelling and making a most infernal hullabaloo, with tin cans and other musical instruments, in their endeavour to scare the thieves. This is what they call *psaya* or *rindja tinyanyana*. The flocks of sparrows, etc., move on at a single flight to the acacias or mimosas, close by, whence they make a descent on the fields of the next neighbour. This proprietress is also on guard, and, in her turn, drives off the birds with a frightful uproar ; thus the duel between birds and human beings goes on for weeks. The mother and children prevail upon the father to build them a little hut (ntjonga, mu-mi) right in the middle of the field, to enable them to protect their sorghum against the feathered enemy, and there they take up their quarters until the cereals have ripened and are ready to be harvested.

to be harvested. Poor cereals! Many grains are wanting! 241
Those mischievous sparrows have taken more than a tithe! In 417
the marshy lands of Lebombo I noticed the people scaring the birds in a somewhat original manner. A cord was stretched right across the field, for a distance of at least thirty or forty yards, supported at intervals by poles, and on it were strung large snail shells (Achatina lamarkiana) as big as one's fist; when the watchers heard the sparrows chirping on the other side of the field, instead of getting up and running after them, yelling and shouting to scare them away, they merely pulled the cord, which made the shells jingle against one another, the movement and noise frightening the birds and sending them off to attack the crops of some less ingenious neighbour! I have also seen scarecrows set up in some places, the ordinary stuffed figure. During these months of bird scaring it is impossible to get the caretakers to do anything but guard their plantations! The little maidservants scamper away to join in the work and the Christian girls no longer come to school! I can well imagine that the husbands often find empty larders at home!

The attraction of the plantation does not however hinder the 273
labourers from doing full justice to the national beer, the bukanye, which is consumed from the middle of January to the end of February! Besides, it is principally after the bukanye that it is necessary to protect the sorghum from the beaks of these winged destroyers.

The agricultural year ends with the *harvest*. Every one 241
harvests his own fields and keeps, as far as possible, his product 221
separate in his own store house. The ears of maize which have been left to dry on the stalks are broken off (tshobela) and are carefully piled in conical baskets in such a manner as to make them hold large quantities. The precious burden is at once deposited in the storehouse. After this the beans are picked (khaya): these do not ripen much before May, after all the other produce, at a season which is called "the time of beans" (nkama wa timbawen). The ground-nuts are unearthed by 241
pounding on the ground all round the stem, and pulling up the whole plant by the roots. It is curious to see the stalks coming

241 out of the earth with their well filled double pods attached to their extremities.

241 The men then construct *drying floors* (tjala, dji-ma) : a mat
251 made of reeds, or of the wood of the palm-tree, is placed in the
343 middle of the field, and supported by four poles ; and on it are
221

The storehouses of Sokis (Rikatla). *Phot. H. A. Junod*

laid (yaneka) ground-nuts, and peas, to remain there exposed to the sun until they are completely dried.

241 The next operation is the *threshing*, or separating the grain
252 from the ears (hula). This is done with sorghum and Kafir
221 corn, but not with maize, of which the cobs are generally kept entire in the storehouse until wanted. The *hula* is done on a specially prepared threshing floor in the middle of the field. The floor has been hardened by means of nkanye stones, and smeared over with clay. The sorghum and corn stems are brought thither, and the ears are beaten with small sticks. Or the ears are cut, placed in mortars and slightly pounded to liberate the grains. The best have been preserved for seed.

grains. The best have been preserved for seed. When the threshing is finished, the grains are collected (wolela or hlakula) in the *lihlelo* basket and winnowed (hehera). Kafir corn and sorghum are then stored in the big *ngula* basket (1). As regards maize, it is kept in the storehouses proper (shitlanta), 241 251 343 221

Dula storehouse in the Shilovane village *Phot. H. A. Junod.*
(The man sitting on the right is Viguet, my faithful informant).

little huts built of reeds with a moveable roof and raised on piles. All the shitlanta belong to the husband, though most of the tilling and all the weeding has been done by the wife, as already explained (I. p. 337). In the Transvaal, beans, peas and ground nuts are packed in the *dula* (dji-ma), which are smeared outside with clay, [423] 343

(1) It is taboo to weave the *ngula* before harvest, just as it is to prepare the stable before the birth of the baby. Before harvest Kafir corn is still *ngimba*, viz., a child not yet born. Who knows if the hail or the locusts will not destroy it? Wait till you have harvested, then you will see what size your basket must be! 241

343 or in small storehouses hung to the branches of trees (mfunge). When the harvest has been plentiful and all the storehouses have been filled, then begins the happy time of winter, of beer drinking, *bunanga* playing, (I. p. 431) paying visits, etc.

II. *Agricultural taboos.*

241 784 The first category of agricultural taboos are those previously mentioned, which spring from the idea of *hierarchy* : the prohibition to sow pumpkin seeds before the elder members of the family, the prohibition to enjoy the first-fruits (Kafir corn, bukanye, etc.) before the gods, the chief, the headman, and the elder brothers have *luma* (I, p. 394). Others belong to the *special feminine taboos*, (girls not allowed to walk amongst the pumpkins, to pluck their fruit or to pick their leaves without certain precautions, I. p. 184). Another category is that of *shimusi*. Certain days are proclaimed by the chief, or fixed by custom, as sabbath days, on which no one is allowed to till the soil. In Ñwamba, when there has been a little rain, it is taboo for the people of the clan to work in the fields ; they must remain at home. Amongst the Nkunas the day on which the new moon appears is also shimusi. The moon must be left to "become firm" (tiyela, hola) ; to cut roots while it is still "soft" is taboo : it would cause strong winds and hail. Complete rest is also customary in Khosen the day following the birth of twins. (See Part VI. Chap. II). Some other taboos are due to the fear of *wizards* : it is forbidden to whistle in the fields after having sown or until the mealies are grown. This would call the "baloyi" and endanger the harvest.

241 754 784 821

241 784 It is a taboo for a woman to remain in a standing position when she borrows a living ember (woka) from people cooking their food in their gardens ; she must sit down when she takes the ember. Should she break this law, it would cause the mealies of the owners of that garden to be burnt (psha) ; the women has "crossed their gardens" (tjemakanya). If however she does this, they

will call her on the day they begin to sow, and she will have to sow the first seed; thus she will prevent all the seeds from "burning." 241 784

But the most stringent taboos are connected with the *threshing of the cereals*. This work is exclusively done by women, and it is taboo for the men to approach the threshing floor. The Makanetas, who cultivate rice extensively, cut the ears and pile them into heaps in their own huts and not on the threshing floor. When the grain is dry, they thresh it by trampling on it. Should any woman pass by, it is taboo to speak to her. If she enters the hut and helps for a little while with the work, then the taboo is removed and you, the owners of the rice, can talk to her. — "Should you do so without that condition being fulfilled, this person would *take your rice* and leave you nothing but the husks (mataba). Should a relative, dwelling in the neighbouring district, come and see you whilst you are threshing rice, don't give her any part of your harvest: let her crush it in the mortar and take it away husked, lest you lose all your grain and keep the husks only! The husks of the rice which you give to your relative must remain with you." (Mboza). The same applies to Kafir corn. To allow a relative from outside to pluck ears from your garden, to thresh them and take them home means to "spoil your corn" (onha mabele). When you are threshing Kafir corn, let the visitor first take the pestle and help you before you speak to her.

As regards *tree culture*, it was formerly considered a taboo to plant foreign kinds, such as bananas, oranges, etc. When Mboza planted the first mango trees in Morakwen, people told him: "You will die! You have called misfortune on yourself (u tihlolele), and other people will eat your fruit!" I heard this taboo explained in Shiluvane as follows. When a man has been obliged to move, and leaves trees planted by him in his old village, people passing near the ruins shake their heads and say: "Look at those trees! They have chased away the master of the village." These two testimonies are interesting, and fitly illustrate the origin of a taboo. The desolation of a ruin has been connected with the presence of new trees, as they have often been noticed together. Hence the idea that the trees are 245 784 824

enters the field, the tinhlamalala at once transform themselves into small snakes which also bear the name of tinhlamalala. (Notice the correspondence of names: a curious instance of verbal magic.) These snakes rush towards the thief, who runs away, seized with terror. Should he take the stolen cobs with him instead of throwing them on to the ground, the tinhlamalala would follow him to his village! This dreadful powder was prepared by a Nkuna named Ñwadjokwane and the people of his village used to inoculate themselves with the drug ; in this way they had nothing to fear from the snakes. 685 789

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Answers to some of Professor Frazer's questions on Agriculture. 241

There are no special ceremonies at the clearance of land for cultivation ; no grafting, nor artificial fertilisation of fruit trees is practised. (They think that trees fecundate each other by means of their roots. See, later on, paragraph on Thonga Botany). They do not believe that a deity animates the crops, only that baloyi (wizards) can increase or diminish the product of the fields (See Part VI). As regards the rite of driving away the vermin from the fields, we shall describe it in Part VI. There are no superstitions about the last corn cut, and no special ceremony practised on the harvest field. Except the rule of silence which must be kept by women threshing rice and Kafir corn, there are no special regulations for persons engaged in agricultural operations, and no sexual taboos. The plough, the hoe, the pestle and the winnowing basket are not used in ceremonial purifications or to avoid dangers.

* * *

As regards Agriculture, it cannot be said that the Thonga tribe is in a very backward stage. Thongas, as well as most of

241 the South African Natives, are essentially agriculturists, and they succeed in obtaining their food in abundance from the soil, although it is not very rich. The variety of their cereals is indeed remarkable, but they have never developed their cultivation to any great extent, because they did not wish to harvest more than was necessary for their immediate needs : there would have been no market for a surplus. Moreover they have never invented the plough, or thought of the use of irrigation, or of manure, those three great means of intensive production which civilised people have so long possessed. As regards irrigation, the Makaneta people made use of the tide, which drives back the waters of the Nkomati River, to water their rice plantations, but they never dug channels for the purpose.

177 241 Civilisation having brought these means of progress within their reach, they show themselves, however, quite ready to take advantage of them. Ploughs are wide-spread amongst Transvaal Thongas, where missionaries have taught them their use. There is no doubt that, having been initiated into civilised methods of cultivation, South African Natives, who have such a strong natural taste for agriculture, will in future considerably develop the resources of their soil.

But two conditions are necessary for this :

1) European Agencies who have at heart the welfare of the Natives, Colonial Governments, or Missionary Societies, must help them to acquire some technical knowledge, and better seeds and implements.

2) The laws of the country must be amended in such a way that the Natives will be encouraged to buy land. As long as they are only tenants of big Land Companies, or provisional occupants, squatters on Crown land, always threatened with the possibility of their gardens being turned into farms, and sold to White people without any compensation, how can they be expected to devote much time and interest to the betterment of the soil ? Individual land tenure will be the best incentive to agricultural progress.

231 562 841 784 men having relations with women during menstruation (I. p. 187). Should a drop of it fall in the cattle kraal, this would endanger the health of the whole herd. Women are even prohibited from passing through a herd of oxen ; they must go round it, because otherwise the death of the calves would ensue. Amongst the Ba-Ngoni this taboo is so strong that a woman guilty of having transgressed against it was put to death (1).

231 262 556 The object of oxen-breeding is not milk but the acquisition of *wealth* ; oxen mean wealth to the Native, a means of purchasing girls and of thus increasing his family. Oxen are also bred for food, the meat being highly appreciated and divided amongst all the members of the family according to the strict rules previously explained (I. p. 329). The slaughtering is done by piercing the heart with an assagai, a painful and sometimes very protracted operation. This occurs at marriage feasts, at other family and national gatherings, at the sacrifice for rain (Part VI), and on special occasions, once a year for instance, when a headman wishes to feast his people. All, even neighbours who are not relatives and travellers, are welcome to the feast. Natives have wonderful olfactory powers. They seem to smell out the *lisuna*, viz., the peculiar odour of the meat, a mile off, and when an ox has been killed you see them emerging from the bush on all sides!

234 As regards *milk*, it certainly plays a part in the food of villages which are fortunate enough to possess a well-filled oxen kraal. The *milking* of the cows presents difficulties unknown in Europe! African cows have not yet learned to submit tamely to this operation! The calf must always be allowed to suck a few mouthfuls, then a boy pulls it away from the teat and the cow consents to be milked. Should a cow be too wild, they pass a string through its

241 462 (1) We meet here with an interesting instance of a superstition having no scientific basis whatever, which is nevertheless productive of good results. Women must keep apart from oxen. Since the plough was introduced amongst South African Natives, they have been quick to notice that it is a very useful instrument, and have adopted it in many places. The plough has to be drawn by oxen and men alone are allowed to drive them. Thus women are relieved of the heavy work of tilling the fields which had been allotted to them by immemorial custom. It is probable that further knowledge will free the Natives from their old fear and from the taboo which resulted from it ; yet the idea that everything connected with oxen belongs to the domain of man will remain and thus real social progress will have been obtained through an absurd superstition !

821 which is also met with in *nyeleti* (star) and in the names of certain rivers. (I. p. 36.) At the present time there is no trace of worship or of mythological conceptions in connection with it. Natives see in its spots a woman carrying a shirundju basket or a bundle of sticks, but they do not attach to that image more importance than we do when we talk of the man in the moon.

821 I have described (I. p. 52) how the new moon is received
527 with exclamations of joy : in the villages the first person who
241 sees it shouts : "Kengelekezeeee,"—"the Crescent! the Crescent!" and this word is passed on from one village to another, and dancers rejoice because they will have moonlight to illuminate their feasts! Such is, at least, the reason now given by the Rongas for this custom. There were perhaps other ideas connected with the new moon in former times. — According to a Nkuna informant the day of the new moon is a *shimuni*, a day of rest. It is taboo to till the fields and cut the roots of the trees with a hoe. The moon must be left to become firm (tiyela). It is still tender as a new born child. Destroying winds might
821 blow and hail fall if this taboo were transgressed. — The
787 appearance of the crescent was also carefully examined, says the
828 same informant. If its horns were turned towards the earth, this showed that there was nothing to fear, all the dangers contained in this month had been poured out : "mafumo ma hangalakile" — "the assagais were dispersed." On the contrary, if the horns were turned towards heaven, this showed that the moon was full of weapons and misfortunes. — The new moon is of great importance in the customs connected with exorcism and possession, as every exorcist must undergo the *haza* purification at each new moon (Chapter III). Moreover Thongas, like many civilised people, also believe that some persons at this time have an attack of madness which is called *rihuhe ra ñhweti*, the lunar madness.

772 When the first quarter appears, the moon is said to *thwaza*,
821 a Zulu word which corresponds to *tjhama* in Thonga, and is very much used in the terminology of possession. Eight days later, it is said to *basa*, to be white or brilliant ; full moon is said to *sima* or to *lata batjongwana*, to put the little children to bed, because when it rises, it finds them already sleeping on their mats.

845 daha). Striking is frequently one of the rites of aggregation.
184 (See Van Gennep, *Rites de Passage*, p. 55). Let us remember that the Tembe clan is of Northern origin (I. p. 23) and has retained some customs which are different from those of the other Thongas (1).

2) Heaven and the "Nunu."

136 The following is a very extraordinary custom, and one which,
241 in many respects, greatly resembles those I have already described.
845 There is to be found, on the shores of Delagoa Bay, a small
772 Coleoptera belonging to the Alcides genus of the Cucurlionidæ
825 family. It has a proboscis-shaped mouth, a very hard carapace of half a centimetre in length, brown, and marked on each elytron with two longitudinal white bands. The Blacks call it the *nunu*. It is a scourge to the fields of beans and maize (much as cockchafers are with us). In December or January, when these insects begin to swarm, the chief men of the country order the diviners to throw the bones, and send the women to pick the "nunu" off the bean stalks. They gather them in "sala" shells. Then they choose (probably by casting lots) *a woman who has given birth to twins.*

(1) Amongst *the Hereros* a multiple birth is the happiest event which could possibly occur! The Rev. E. Dannert published in the *Capetown Folklore Journal* an account of the customs practised on such occasions by the Natives of this tribe, which occupies the Western side of Southern Africa, at about the same latitude as the Thongas. The father and mother are condemned to complete silence, under penalty of bringing a curse on those who speak to them. All the members of the tribe are convened and bring their cattle with them. The twins' family has to appear before the whole assembly, and is received with lamentations. Each individual must present himself to the parents, and make them a gift of beads, or other ornaments, in return for which the father and mother purify them by means of a certain powder. After this the father has the right of going from village to village, and claiming an ox from each one, as a kind of ransom. He becomes quite a rich man. This is the *kunga rite*, which we have also met with on many occasions amongst the Thongas (I. p. 124.). How can this diversity between the customs of the Hereros and those of most of the Thongas be explained? No doubt by this vague mysterious idea of Heaven, which is behind the religious conceptions of these tribes and in which all these rites originated. This celestial power, when it manifests itself, stupefies the Natives, for it causes "a death," entails a curse. With the Thongas it is the mother and children who are the objects of this malediction, hence the purifying ceremonies imposed upon them. With the Hereros, it is the whole tribe which is affected. The family into which the twins are born has been distinguished and honoured by this heavenly visitation, and collects for itself the fines which all must pay to regain the celestial favour!

One of her daughters, who is one of the twins, is told to throw the whole "catch" of insects into the neighbouring lake. She is accompanied by a woman of mature age, and, without speaking a word, must go straight to the lake in question. Behind her marches the whole crowd of women, arms, waists and heads covered with grass, carrying branches of the big-leaved manioc, which they wave from side to side, and singing the following song, which has been composed for this occasion :

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Nunu, muka! Hi da mabele !
Nunu, go away! That we may eat mealies !

The twin throws her little calabash into the water without turning round (for she is not allowed to look behind). Then the savage yells are raised louder than ever, and the women sing their impure songs (ta ku ruketela), which they would never dare to utter on ordinary occasions, and which are reserved for these ceremonies, rain seeking and "nunu" hunting.

On that day, as during the mbelele, woe to the man who walks along the paths! He is pitilessly attacked by these viragos, who push him to one side, or even maltreat him, and none of his fellows will go to his assistance. They all keep out of the way, for they well know what would be in store for them, should they meet the savage crowd! So they mostly stay quietly at home in their huts!

241 772 579 825

The "nunu" is not always thrown into the water. Sometimes, to get rid of the plague, or rather to conjure it away, they start out in a band, armed with sticks, to throw these destructive insects on to neighbouring lands. It would seem that the men are mixed up in these underhand tricks, for it is said that this way of handing over the "nunu" to neighbours, often leads to pitched battles, in which sticks are wielded to some purpose, and blows rain thick and heavy! The people of Rikatla, citizens of Nondwane, used to make a present of their pseudo-cockchafers to the inhabitants of the district of Makunyule, belonging to the Mabota clan. But the true way of conjuring away the "nunu" is to drown them in the lake, and this custom, in common with the preceding ones, certainly has some connection with the notion of Heaven, the appearance of these pests being caused by that mysterious power, which

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